

VZCZCXRO4056

OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHAN #0443 1721014  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 201014Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1389  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS ANTANANARIVO 000443

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/FO, AND DS/IP/AF  
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER  
PRETORIA FOR POLCOUNS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [IR](#) [CN](#)  
SUBJECT: COMORAN PRESIDENT VISITS IRAN

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On June 14, Union of the Comoros President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi and a high-ranking political and economic Comoran delegation arrived in Tehran for a three-day visit that included meetings with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and a visit to the holy city of Mashhad. Iranian and Comoran officials reportedly signed two letters of understanding and one agreement on Tehran's assistance to Moroni in different development projects. Comoran Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaffar conveyed to Embassy Antananarivo that the Comoros continues to support the USG position on Iran's nuclear program and that President Sambi's visit had nothing to do with this issue. END SUMMARY.

#### STRENGTHENING COMOROS-IRAN BILATERAL TIES

¶2. (U) President Sambi's meeting with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was preceded by an official welcome ceremony where the two countries' national anthems were played and the two presidents reviewed the guard of honor. Subsequently, they met privately to discuss strengthened bilateral ties in all fields. Sambi reportedly requested Iran's experience for his country's development and progress. Media reports quote Ahmadinejad as saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran sets no limits to the transfer of its experiences or workforce to Comoros," whether in the political, economic, agricultural or educational fields. Iranian and Comoran officials reportedly signed two letters of understanding and one agreement on Tehran's assistance to Moroni in different development projects. Speaking to reporters, President Sambi referred to his visit to Iran as "positive" and "successful."

#### RECEIVES WARNING MUSLIMS MUST UNITE DESPITE THE "ENEMY"

¶3. (U) According to media reports, in a meeting on June 16, Supreme Leader Khamenei told President Sambi that Muslims should put aside their geographical, racial and religious difference and take practical measures to secure a permanent seat at the UN council. Khamenei called on Islamic countries to forge unity against the "enemies" and take "practical" steps for realizing their wishes. He said, "Islamic Ummah is in dire need of unity; unity and cooperation among world Muslims will bring them more strength ... However, imperial powers are apposed to such an achievement in the world of Islam." Referring to Iran's nuclear developments, Khamenei said, "The enemies of Islam are well aware that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful, however, they spare no efforts to halt the program, for they consider the Iranian nation's move an upward step." He also said, "The enemies have employed all means to sow the seed of discord among Muslims by creating disputes between Shiites and Sunnis ... Unfortunately, some of the politicians, intellectuals and Ulama in Islamic countries have been caught in the trap." In return, President Sambi reportedly expressed satisfaction with the

meeting and called for expansion of bilateral relations. Sambi again urged the need for his country to benefit from the invaluable experiences of Iranian experts for its development, saying, "Comoros needs the views of Iranian experts to implement developmental projects."

#### COMOROS STILL BACKS USG ON IRAN'S NUCLEAR ISSUES

14. (SBU) Embassy Antananarivo contacted the Government of the Union of the Comoros several times to receive clarification on President Sambi's visit. Through staff contacts, Comoran Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaffar conveyed to the Embassy that the Comoran Government does not support Iran's nuclear program, asserting that President Sambi's visit to Iran had nothing to do with this issue. Jaffar emphasized that the Comoran government will always support its key partners such as the U.S. and the League of Arab States, who are resolutely against Iran's nuclear program.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: While Sambi's visit to Tehran certainly raises a red flag, Post notes that President Sambi seemed to be using the same talking points he regularly uses with the United States and all major partners -- a request for greater economic and development assistance to pull his country out of desperate poverty. Throughout his discussions with Post over the last several years, President Sambi and his government have repeatedly emphasized that they seek expanded partnership and development assistance from partners around the world, including the Middle East, but with "no strings attached." That said, it appears likely that Iran will expect - at a minimum - Comoran support for its positions in international fora. Sambi's ability to maintain a degree of independence may well depend on what alternative sources of development assistance are available to him. END COMMENT.

MARQUARDT